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304
DIGITAL EDITION
SPAWN
TODD MCFARLANE
JASON SHAWN ALEXANDER
HELL HUNT
PART 3

SPAWN

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SPAWN CREATED BY
TODD McFARLANE

PREVIOUSLY IN *SPAWN*

In Hell Hunt part 2 - Spawn (Al Simmons) comes Face-to-Face with Priest (aka. She-Spawn!). Is she friend or foe now? "Trust No One!" is Spawn's first thought! Their "Dance" progresses, with cooler heads finally winning out. With the Death of NYX brought about by a shocking assailant and the activation of 12 individuals who contain the "Spawn Force", there are bigger things to worry about...Like who is imprisoned in the Vatican, and what are his plans for our Heroes?

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FOOLISHLY, ED FRANK THOUGHT HE COULD JUST ESCAPE HIS PAST. DISAPPEAR SOME PLACE UNTIL HE FIGURED THINGS OUT.
BUT HE KNEW THAT WAS A PIPE DREAM. HEAVEN WASN'T JUST GOING TO LET HIM CHANGE SIDES. THEY'D INVESTED TOO MUCH TIME INTO HIM BECOMING THEIR GREAT WARRIOR. THEY CALLED HIM "REDEEMER" AND UNTIL LAST WEEK THAT'S ALL HE THOUGHT HE'D EVER BE.
HARDWARE
THEN HE HAD TO MAKE A CHOICE, ONE FORCED UPON HIM BY SPAWN.
WE HAVE A VISUAL ON OUR TARGET. HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED?
IS HE ALONE?
NO. HE'S BEEN HIDING IN A SMALL TOWN SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER. I THINK HE'S AWARE OF OUR PRESENCE BUT HASN'T ENGAGED YET.
HE'S USING HIS HUMAN FORM, THEN?
THAT'S ALL WE'VE SEEN THIS MISSION.
HOW CLOSE IS HE TO THE OTHER HUMANS?
I THINK HE'S TRYING TO LOSE US IN A CROWD HE'S COMING UPON. I DON'T THINK HE WANTS A PUBLIC FIGHT.
TOO BAD FOR HIM. YOUR ORDERS ARE TO ELIMINATE THE TARGET...

...BY ANY FORCE NECESSARY.

AND WE WANT YOU TO SEND A LOUD AND **AGGRESSIVE** MESSAGE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

COPY THAT. WE HAVE OUR ORDERS.

IN A HEARTBEAT, THE CARNAGE BEGINS, WITHOUT A MOMENT'S PAUSE BEFORE THE SAVAGE SLAUGHTER THEY'RE GOING TO INFLICT.
BRAKKA
BRAKKA
BRAKKA

AND INSTEAD OF STANDING HIS GROUND OR TAKING ON HIS NEW FORM.* HE CHOOSES TO FLEE.
*See issue 300 – Todd
YOU COWARD!
BLAM
VIIP
SHUNK
KNOW WHAT GOD DOES TO TRAITORS?
HE SHOOTS THEM, IN THE SNOW, LIKE A DISEASED DOG.

DID YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE DOING? THAT THEY'D COME LOOKING FOR EVERYONE-- ALL OF US!
OR DID THAT NOT CROSS YOUR MIND?
LOOK, I GET YOU'RE UPSET, BUT...
UPSET?!
THEY KILLED HER! BECAUSE OF YOU!
SO, DON'T CONDESCEND TO ME! THIS IS YOUR DOING!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
TO KNOW HOW TO STAY ALIVE NOW THAT I'M A PART OF YOUR MESS! THESE POWERS WILL MAKE ME A...
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO TAKE THEM.
TAKE THEM?! SCREW YOU!
THAT'S MATURE.
MATURE?
Um... CAN I SUGGEST SOMETHING?
NO!
NO!

WITH EMOTIONS RUNNING HIGH FOR EVERYONE, MARC'S INTRUSION CREATES THE AWKWARD SILENCE THEY ALL NEEDED...
I PROMISE, NYX WASN'T SUPPOSED TO DIE. I WAS. NOT HER. IT'S WHY I PLANTED SLIVERS OF MY COSTUME IN OTHERS, SO THEY COULD TAKE OVER ONCE I WAS GONE.
YOU WERE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF?
NO. I TRIED THAT BEFORE, IT DIDN'T WORK. ASK JIM DOWNING. NO, WHAT I LEARNED, WHEN I CAME BACK FROM THE 'VOID,' WAS HOW I COULD SLOW THEM DOWN.
AND THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THAT WORK WAS TO GET HEAVEN AND HELL IN THE SAME PLACE. WITH THE SAME AGENDA.
THAT'S WHY I LET THEM JAIL ME. WHY I WENT PUBLIC WITH MY IDENTITY... TO CONFUSE THEM. I HIT THEIR BUSINESSES AND TURNED THE MEDIA ON THEM.
OF COURSE, THEY WERE GOING TO HUNT ME. BUT THEIR ALLIANCE GAVE ME THE CHANCE I FINALLY NEEDED, BUT WHEN I TRIGGERED MY BOMB IT WAS SUPPOSED TO KILL ALL OF US.

YOU WERE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF?
IF I HAD TO.
WELL, IT'S HAD THE OPPOSITE EFFECT BECAUSE YOUR "SPAWN FORCE" IS MULTIPLYING. DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHO OR WHAT THEY ARE?
OR WHETHER YOU HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER THEM?
LIKE I SAID, I KNOW WHERE I PLANTED FIVE OF MY SEEDS, BUT THE OTHERS... I'LL HAVE TO MAKE A DETERMINATION ABOUT THEM WHEN I HUNT THEM DOWN. ANY SUGGESTION ON HOW WE SEPARATE THE FIVE I KNOW FROM THE REST?
THERE'S ONE UP IN NORTH DAKOTA THAT SENDING THE SAME CORE ENERGY READING AS THE "DEAD ZONE" IN NEW YORK. IN FACT, IT SEEMS TO HAVE ORIGINATED FROM NEW YORK.

BOYS, I'M ABOUT TO COME UNGLUED... ALL I CARE ABOUT IS WHETHER ANY OF THOSE BLIPS HAVE ANY CONNECTION TO NYX--AND IF THEY DO, I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING.
IT'S EDDIE. IT HAS TO BE.
WHO'S THAT?
AN ANGEL CALLED 'THE REDEEMER.'
THE ONE YOU FELL INTO THE SHADOWS* WITH?
YES. AND I SAW HIM MAKE A PHYSICAL CHANGE IN FRONT OF ME.
*Issue 299 – Todd
THEN YOU'RE RIGHT, THAT HAS TO BE HIM. BUT SOMETHING'S WRONG. HIS MOVEMENT PATTERN HAS BEEN PRETTY ERRATIC SINCE I PICKED UP HIS SIGNAL.
BECAUSE THEY'RE HUNTING HIM.

JUST COMING IN AT THIS EARLY HOUR ARE REPORTS OF WHAT MAY BE A MASS SHOOTING IN WESTHOPE, NORTH DAKOTA, JUST A FEW MILES SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER.

ARMED MEN REPORTEDLY ENTERED THE TOWN SQUARE AND OPENED FIRE INTO THE CROWD GATHERED FOR A CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY. DETAILS ARE FEW AT THIS TIME, DUE TO THE TINY POPULATION IN THIS REMOTE AREA.

SOCIAL MEDIA, MEANWHILE, IS BEING FLOODED WITH IMAGES OF PANIC AND BLOODSHEAD. AMONG THE GATHERED REVELERS THERE APPEAR TO BE MANY WHO ARE WOUNDED AND, POSSIBLY, DEAD.

LOCAL COVERAGE CAME TO AN ABRUPT HALT WHEN NEWS CREWS FLED FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.

WE WILL BE LIVE WITH UPDATES ON THIS STORY AS MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.

IT IS UNCLEAR IF STATE POLICE ARE ON THE SCENE YET, LET ALONE WHETHER THEY HAVE ***ENGAGED*** THE GUNMEN.

INFORMATION IS COMING IN VIA ***SOCIAL MEDIA,*** FASTER THAN IT CAN BE ANALYZED. AS WE SIFT THROUGH INCOMING PHOTOS AND TWEETS, THOUGH, AT LEAST ***TWO GUNMEN*** HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED. HOWEVER, THEY ARE UNIDENTIFIED. AT THIS MOMENT, NO ONE HAS ANY IDEA AS TO A ***MOTIVE.***

THE CONSENSUS SEEMS TO BE THIS: MEN WITH GUNS ***OPENED FIRE,*** FOLLOWED BY A FLASH OF ***GREEN LIGHT.*** THERE'S NO WAY AT ALL TO DETERMINE WHETHER THESE EVENTS ARE LINKED. NO ONE HAS OFFERED ANY EXPLANATION, OR EVEN SPECULATION, REGARDING THE ***NATURE*** OF THE GREEN LIGHT.

YOU CAN DEPEND ON US FOR ***ONGOING COVERAGE*** AS THIS STORY UNFOLDS.

WHERE THE HECK ARE THE GOOD GUYS WITH THE GUNS?!

THIS IS ***NORTH DAKOTA*** WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, FOR PETE'S SAKE!

STATE POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED THEY ARE EN ROUTE AS WE SPEAK. "IT'S POSSIBLY AN EXPLOSION OF SOME KIND," IS THE BEST THEY CAN COME UP WITH. ***TELL ME ANOTHER ONE, COPPER...*** THE SELFIES ARE SHOWING HUNDREDS OF ***LITTLE*** EXPLOSIONS, AND JUST AS MANY ***BULLET*** CASINGS. ***AND IN FRONT OF A CHRISTMAS TREE!!*** THERE USED TO BE RESPECT FOR ***TRADITION,*** BACK IN BETTER TIMES!!

MOLES, TROLLS, GRASSY KNOLLS... GIVE ME A GOOD ***CONSPIRACY*** AT THIS TIME OF THE MORNING. I DON'T WANT TO BE THINKING ABOUT BURYING MY RELATIVES IN THE MIDDLE OF ***WINTER.***

JESUS! YOU SAID THEY WERE TRYING TO HIDE FROM THE PUBLIC?
THESE AREN'T THE SAME, THEY'RE ANOTHER BREED!
I'M COMING WITH YOU.
GOOD! I COULD USE THE HELP.
AND I COULD USE THE ANGER RELEASE.
KLIK
SNAP
SNAP

0:0:1:2

HALF A WORLD AWAY IN VATICAN CITY
HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW SIGNALS?
WE'RE WORKING AS FAST AS WE CAN, BUT NO CONCRETE DATA SO FAR.
YOU THINK THIS IS TIED TO THE ALBANIAN INCIDENT?
PRETTY SURE. WHEN OUR SIGNAL FOR CLOWN CAME OFF THE BOARD, SEVEN NEW SIGNALS IMMEDIATELY APPEARED. IS SPAWN STILL ALIVE?
WE HAVE TO ASSUME ONE OF THOSE READINGS IS HIS.
SO... HE SOMEHOW KILLS CLOWN AND ONE OF HEAVEN'S TOP OPERATIVES, THEN MAGICALLY STARTS MULTIPLYING HIMSELF? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
I'M SAYING WE'RE MONITORING EVERY SIGNAL WE CAN. BUT IT'S TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE IF THESE NEW FORCES ARE COMING FROM HELL'S OR HEAVEN'S SIDE.
THEN LET'S FIND OUT! NOW! IF WE'RE AT WAR WITH MORE SPAWNS THAT'S A HUGE PROBLEM! IT'S TIME TO RELEASE OUR "HUNTER!"

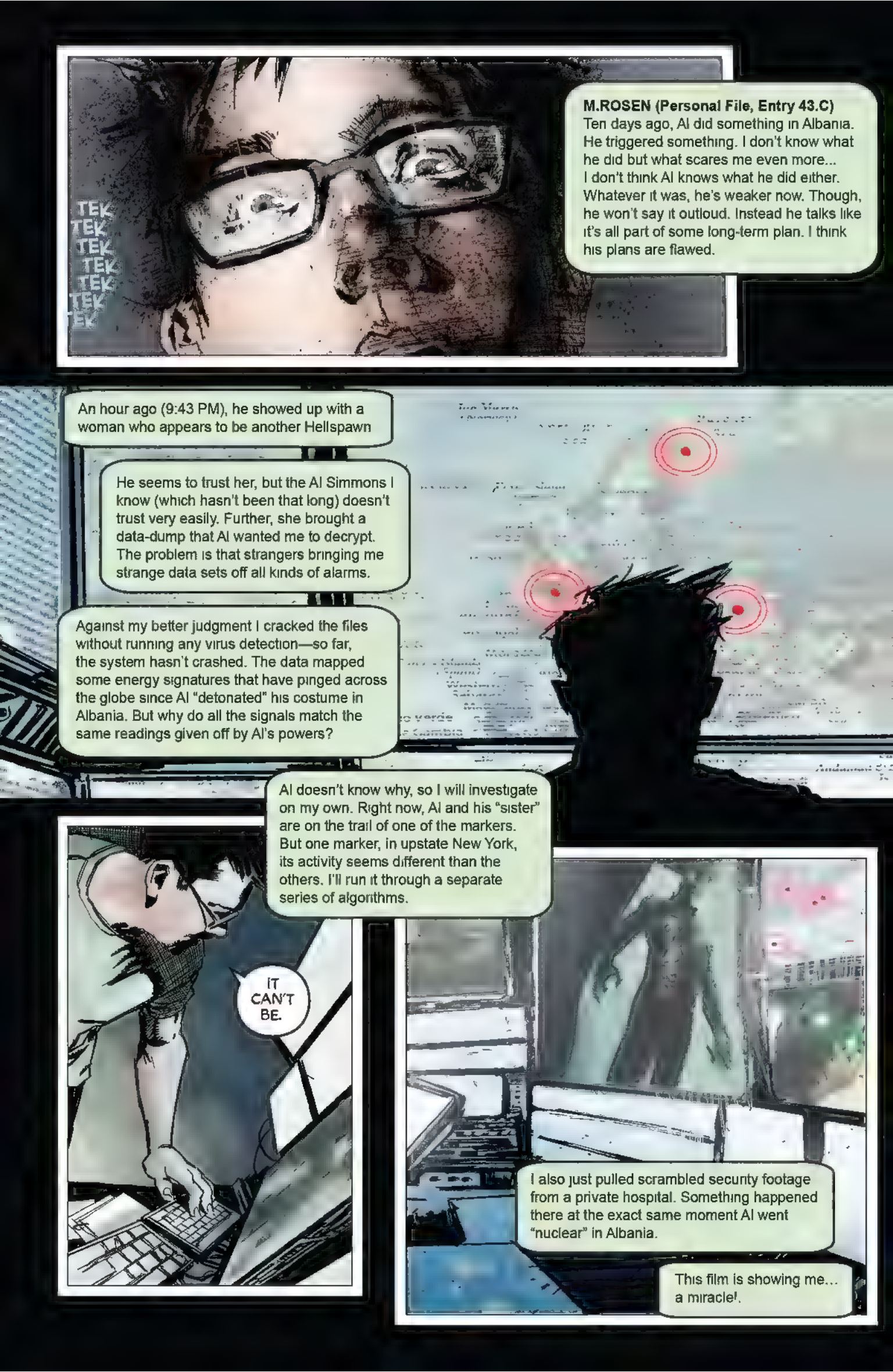
IN A SUBTERRANEAN BASEMENT BELOW THE VATICAN...
KILL THE LIGHTS.
WE KNOW YOU LIKE THE DARKNESS BETTER.
AND WE BOTH KNOW YOU'VE BEEN DOWN HERE A VERY LONG TIME. CONSTANTLY SCREAMING ABOUT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, ABOUT YOUR DEVOTION. WELL, MY SON, THE LORD HAS SENT ME A MESSAGE.
HE WANTS YOU TO PERFORM A MISSION FOR HIM.
TO PROVE IF YOU'RE TRULY ONE OF US.

"BECAUSE THERE ARE FORCES AT PLAY WHO WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO DISCREDIT US TO THE REST OF THE WORLD!"
"AND SADLY, SOME OF THOSE WHO MEAN TO DESTROY US ARE ROGUE AGENTS FROM HEAVEN!"
"OR ARE THEY TRAITORS, LOYAL ONLY TO THEMSELVES?"
"WE NEED YOU TO FIND OUT WHO THESE NEW INTRUDERS ARE... WHO DO THEY WORK FOR? SATAN? GOD? SPAWN?"

"ONCE YOU DETERMINE THOSE ANSWERS, KILL THOSE YOU THEN DEEM UNWORTHY!"
YOUR SOUL, CHILD!--IT'S TIME YOU LAID IT BARE!

CHAPTER TWO

"The Miracle"


TEK
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M.ROSEN (Personal File, Entry 43.C)
Ten days ago, Al did something in Albania. He triggered something. I don't know what he did but what scares me even more... I don't think Al knows what he did either. Whatever it was, he's weaker now. Though, he won't say it outloud. Instead he talks like it's all part of some long-term plan. I think his plans are flawed.
An hour ago (9:43 PM), he showed up with a woman who appears to be another Hellspawn
He seems to trust her, but the Al Simmons I know (which hasn't been that long) doesn't trust very easily. Further, she brought a data-dump that Al wanted me to decrypt. The problem is that strangers bringing me strange data sets off all kinds of alarms.
Against my better judgment I cracked the files without running any virus detection—so far, the system hasn't crashed. The data mapped some energy signatures that have pinged across the globe since Al "detonated" his costume in Albania. But why do all the signals match the same readings given off by Al's powers?
Al doesn't know why, so I will investigate on my own. Right now, Al and his "sister" are on the trail of one of the markers. But one marker, in upstate New York, its activity seems different than the others. I'll run it through a separate series of algorithms.
IT CAN'T BE.
I also just pulled scrambled security footage from a private hospital. Something happened there at the exact same moment Al went "nuclear" in Albania.
This film is showing me... a miracle!

It's **Jim Downing!** How does he fit into all of Al's plans? And why d dn't Al say anything about this? It's why I keep thinking Al doesn't know what he's triggered He knew the relationship I had with Jim How close we were before Jim lapsed into another coma. Jim had to be one of the five people Al p aced his "power seeds" into. Possibly even the first one

My other files are fil ed with notes, theories and firsthand accounts of my time with Jim. On top of which, Jim may have been the very first piece A placed on the board I say "may have been" because Al has plans embedded in other plans. So, I can't be sure. Then, there s the big questions What side is Jim even one?!? Hell, what side am I on??????

I'm getting worried about Al He s spreading himself way too thin. The number of enemies he s trying to fight at once... The scale of the war he's battling.. It's too much for one man to do alone. Maybe that's why he picked Jim. I know Al sa d he thought he was going to d e in Albania but if he didn't, he'd have the upper-hand... He'd build an army, starting with the first five "seeds" he planted. And, of course, Jim wou d be one of those five

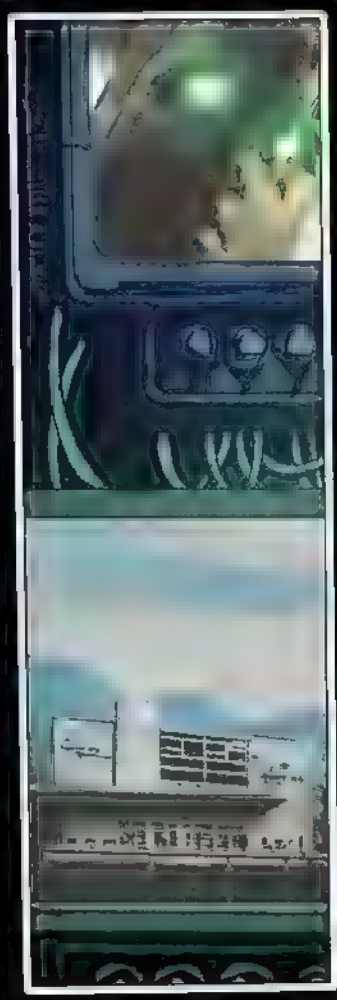
Al wants to be the good guy--the hero--but his sins, his anger, they give Simmons a dark s de A side I can't fully trust Maybe that s why he chose Jim, because he knows Jim's personality s nearly the opposite of his own A smart leader always finds those who can fil the leader's weaknesses

I need to find Jim, because he s a target now, too. Al said he rigged the outcome of his fight with Heaven and Hell by p acing s ivers of his powers in peop e he believes would take up his cause if (when) he falls. What he didn't do, I'm betting, is give any of those five the opt on to say no. Or tell them they would become targets Apparently, one of his "chosen" is already dead--a g rl named, Nyx. Did research on her but found nothing Obvious y, that wasn't her rea name

I'll keep investigating because her life could he p lead to answers about her death. But, more importantly Jim's back. And, I don t know what the other's A "cursed" with his powers are all about, but Jim Downing is a unique beast--his soul has lived in both Heaven and He l According to Spawn lore that s a rare combo. He's been **damned** and **saved** That just might make him a b gger target than Al himself. I wonder .. Is Al channeling some of Jim's personality already?

It would be easy to see Al s recent act ons as be ng inspired by Jim s own--going public, seeking the spotlight, letting the world know that Lt Col Al Simmons was alive and "well". Would Al have made those moves without J m's example? Hard to say. Harder to say . How will Al react as his public persona continues to gain attent on? Cou d be a timebomb

But Al has touched one person he isn't think ng about **ME!** I'm caught in the middle of events I can barely keep track of much less comprehend At times I feel like a soldier in an impossible war then I flip to feel ng like a prisoner. I'm just human. Al seems to forget that. Everything around us isn't normal except me. I can d e! He didn't give me any of his damn powers. Maybe he thinks he can just replace me. Maybe he really doesn't g ve a shit



I'd never say it to Al's face, but I can't tell from one minute to the next if he's a man empowered by demonic forces, or a demon hiding in the skin of a man. One second, he appears to be the soldier who'd take a bullet to save a President s life. A beat later he has this feeling about him like he really isn't in control of himself. That's what's scaring me most about all this. That I can't come to grips with being able to totally trust Al.

And what if—really, what if, he truly is the very monster he claims to oppose? I won't be able to stop him because I'm at his mercy. Everyday. That's why I feel like a prisoner sometimes and why I need to find, Jim. Hopefully, he'll be able to tell me if we can put our faith in Al. If we can all help in his war against the evil that swarms around us every second of our lives. I hope Jim tells me the answer is "YES" that Al is the only safeguard preventing our world from utter collapse

Because if that isn't true, then, like it or not, Jim just might need to save us all

TO BE CONTINUED...

SPAWNING GROUND

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CONGRATULATIONS TO JASON AND DINORA!

WE WELCOME YOUR NEWEST ADDITION TO THE

SPAWN FAMILY

AIDEN DOUGLAS AURELIO ALEXANDER

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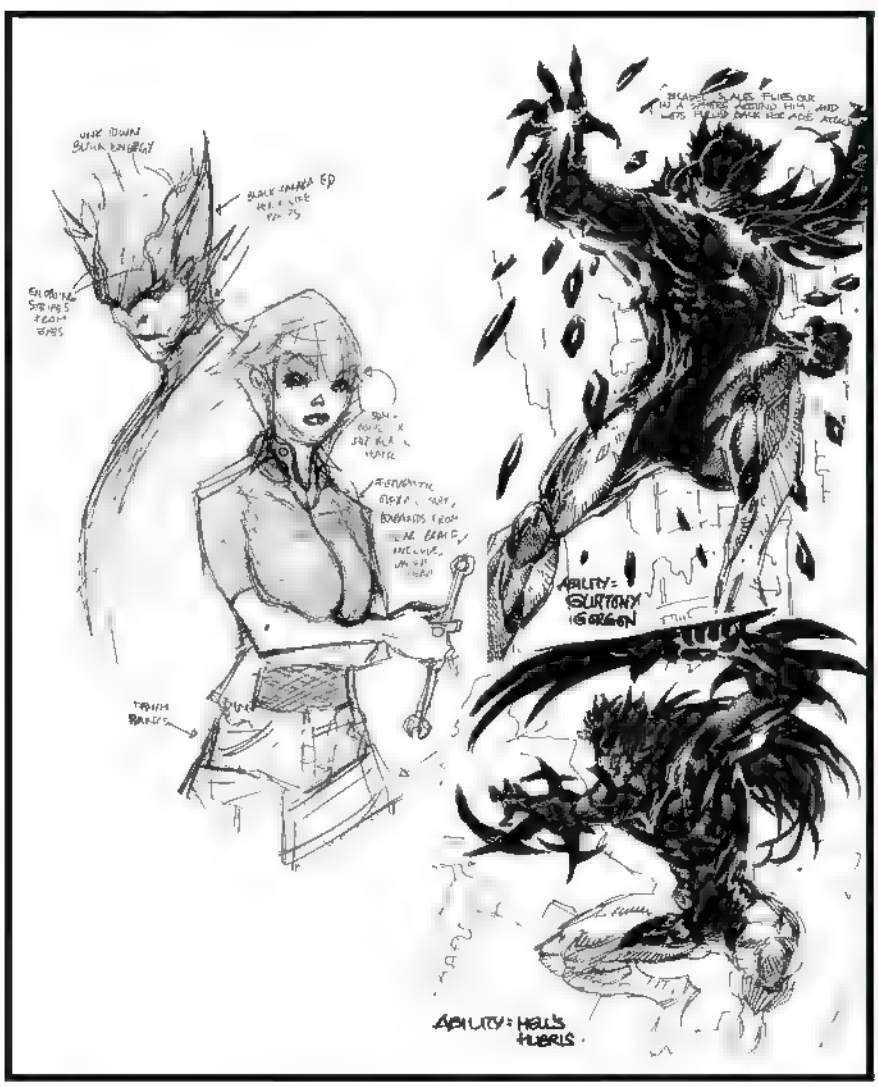
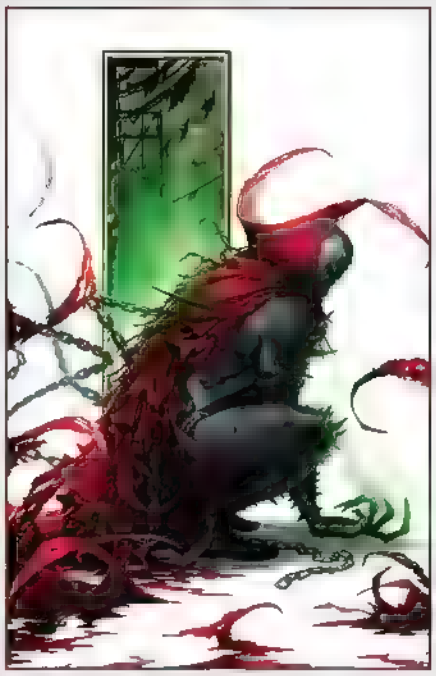
Happy New Year!

To celebrate the end of the year and to kickstart 2020, here's a special SNEAK PEEK at some of Philip Tan's conceptual artwork for his upcoming arc in SPAWN #306-308. These are early character design sketches Philip crafted as he and Todd began breaking the story, which will see Al face a challenge like nothing he's faced before. The future is coming, and it's a killer...

-Jon



Philip Tan's Character Concept Sketchwork for Spawn Upcoming Issues 306-308



NEXT ISSUE

"HELL HUNT," Part Four Jessica Priest struggles with her new powers. Eddie Frank fights against the influence of the Redeemer. And Spawn has a final showdown with Medieval Spawn that will alter the course of the war between Heaven and Hell. With this gripping story arc finale, featuring a special 5-page bonus comic drawn by TODD McFARLANE, the hunt is on, and a new era of SPAWN has begun!

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I TOLD YOU,
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